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GOVERNMENT OF CANADA LAUNCHES ENGAGEMENT PROCESS ON FRAMEWORK FOR ABORIGINAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

2-3077

Ottawa (August 8, 2008) - Today, the Government of Canada launched an engagement process to seek input in the development of a new federal framework for Aboriginal economic development.

"Our government is following through on our *Budget 2008* commitment to deliver a new federal Framework by the end of the year," said Minister Strahl. "These engagement efforts open a dialogue so we can share our views on what the Framework should include and how it should be implemented. Together, we can effect meaningful change."

A key component of the process is to seek broad public input directly through Indian and Northern Affairs Canada's (INAC) website, via e-mail, a toll-free number or by direct mail by September 30, 2008.

In addition, over the summer, INAC will convene meetings of key economic development experts across the country to seek their technical advice on Aboriginal economic development.

To help focus input, a discussion guide entitled *Toward a New Federal Framework for Aboriginal Economic Development* has been produced and is available online. The guide is intended to provide information to promote discussion among Aboriginal organizations and communities, the private sector, provincial and territorial governments, and other interested stakeholders and individuals. The guide will also be used by department officials to promote discussion during the INAC-led sessions.

Copies of the guide will be shared with Canada's Aboriginal leadership, the National

Aboriginal Economic Development Board, the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business, key Aboriginal stakeholders and other potential partners, including business and professional associations, community organizations and Non-Governmental Organizations.

Input obtained via this engagement process will contribute to the creation of the new federal Framework for Aboriginal Economic Development.

Backgrounder - Toward a New Federal Framework for Aboriginal Economic Development

For further information please contact:

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Backgrounder - Toward a New Federal Framework for Aboriginal Economic Development

In *Budget 2008*, the Government of Canada committed to developing a new federal framework for Aboriginal economic development by the end of 2008. The Government also committed to work with Aboriginal peoples and other stakeholders in the development of this new framework.

Accordingly, the Government will convene key economic development experts across the country to seek their technical input on Aboriginal economic development. Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) will lead this series of engagement sessions across the country this summer.

In tandem with these face-to-face sessions, the Government will seek broad public input to help inform the development of the new federal Framework through INAC's website, via e-mail, toll-free number or by direct mail by September 30, 2008 (see details below).

To help focus input, a discussion guide entitled *Toward a New Federal Framework for Aboriginal Economic Development* has been produced and is available online. The guide is intended to provide information to promote discussion among Aboriginal organizations and communities, the private sector, provincial and territorial governments, and other interested stakeholders and individuals. The guide will also be used by department officials during the INAC-led sessions.

Copies of the guide will be shared with Canada's Aboriginal leadership, the National Aboriginal Economic Development Board, the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business, key Aboriginal stakeholders and other potential partners, including business and professional associations and community organizations and Non-Governmental Organizations.

A number of key questions are presented in the guide. For example:

- What specific opportunities, now and in the future, do you see for Aboriginal people and businesses to participate more fully in the Canadian economy?
- What are the barriers to the full participation of Aboriginal people, communities and businesses in these opportunities?
- How can these barriers best be addressed? How can the federal government improve its contribution to the economic development of Aboriginal people, businesses and institutions?

Input obtained via this engagement process will contribute to the creation of the new federal Framework for Aboriginal Economic Development.

This input will build on the significant body of work that has been undertaken in the past 10 years on Aboriginal economic development. From the 1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples to the 2007 Report of the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, entitled *Sharing Canada's Prosperity: A Hand Up, Not a Hand Out,* over 120 studies and reports have been taken into account.

Linking Aboriginal economic development to Advantage Canada

In 2006, the Government of Canada released *Advantage Canada: Building a Strong Economy for Canadians*, a strategic, long-term economic plan designed to improve Canada's economic prosperity today and in the future.

Advantage Canada is focused on helping people and business strive for excellence, and recognizes that Government has an important role to play in creating the right conditions for Canadians — and Canadian businesses and organizations — to thrive. The plan is designed to create new opportunities and choices for Canadians.

Advantage Canada also recognizes that building new opportunities for Aboriginal Canadians to fully participate in the Canadian economy is the most effective way to address the socio-economic gap faced by the majority of Aboriginal Canadians. To take advantage of today's opportunities, we need to modernize our approach to Aboriginal economic development.

All Canadians have a stake in Aboriginal economic development. Aboriginal people and communities want to improve their economic participation and well-being; businesses want access to the untapped resources of the Aboriginal labour force; Canadians want a strong, inclusive economy.

The Canadian economy has evolved and with it, a growing and diverse Aboriginal segment of the economy has emerged. This current economic reality demonstrates the need for a new framework for Aboriginal economic development. The framework must address not only the challenges of small business development and employment, but also the challenges and opportunities related to Aboriginal participation in major projects, the need to link the emerging Aboriginal business community to the main capital markets and to the broader private sector, and the need to address some of the more fundamental legal and regulatory barriers.

Without a new framework for Aboriginal economic development, the economic potential of Aboriginal Canadians would not be fully realized and the gap in socio-economic outcomes between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians would not be improved. All Canadians benefit from strong, healthy, self-reliant Aboriginal peoples and communities. The time has come to make Aboriginal peoples full and meaningful partners in the Canadian economy, both for the benefit of Aboriginal people and for the good of the country as a whole.

Your input is welcome

Individuals and organizations wishing to participate in the engagement process are welcome to provide input via:

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